

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 EURE-00 INRE-00 EB-07 TRSE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

/066 W

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O 261726Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4368

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 24923

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FR, PINT

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE OF AUGUST 25:  
EMBASSY COMMENT

REF: PARIS 24788 (NOTAL)

1. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S TELEVISED PRESS  
CONFERENCE OF AUGUST 25 DISPELLED MOST REMAINING  
QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC  
RESIGNED AND WHAT FUTURE GOF STRATEGY WOULD BE, BOTH  
AS REGARDS THE COUNTRY AND AS REGARDS RELATIONS BETWEEN  
THE ELYSEE AND MATIGNON. THOUGH MANY LOCAL OBSERVERS  
INTERPRET CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION MAINLY AS A HARD-NOSED  
REACTION ON HIS PART TO THE ONGOING DISAGREEMENTS HE  
HAD WITH GISCARD OVER POLICY, INDIVIDUAL FUNCTION, ETC.,  
IT WOULD APPEAR NEVERTHELESS THAT THE PM ACTED IN A  
FASHION THAT PRECLUDED NEGOTIATION. BY THREATENING TO  
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RESIGN UNLESS HE WERE GIVEN INCREASED CONTROL OVER

POLICY MAKING, CHIRAC BACKED THE PRESIDENT INTO A CORNER AND FORECLOSED ANY CHANCE OF THE PROBLEM'S BEING RESOLVED WITHOUT CHIRAC'S DEPARTURE. NO FIFTH REPUBLIC PRESIDENT COULD ACCEPT SUCH AN ULTIMATUM ON THE PART OF HIS PM WITHOUT VISIBLY ALTERING CONSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE IN A DRASTIC FASHION. VGE MADE THAT POINT CLEAR IN HIS TV CONFERENCE. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT HE AND HE ALONE WOULD DIRECT ALL THAT IS "PERMANENT AND ESSENTIAL" IN POLICY MAKING, AND THAT THE NEWLY-NAMED PM RAYMOND BARRE WOULD HANDLE WHAT GISCARD CALLED "CONTINGENT PROBLEMS." THUS GISCARD TAKES ANOTHER STEP IN HIS LONG DECLARED AIM OF PRESIDENTIALIZING THE REGIME, AND WE CAN EXPECT THAT BARRE WILL CARRY OUT WITH FAR LESS ILL WILL THAN HIS PREDECESSOR THE POLICIES NEEDED TO TRANSFORM FRANCE INTO A "LIBERAL ADVANCED SOCIETY." WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT BARRE WILL BE MORE A KIND OF SUPER ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION DOES NOT CONTAIN THE SAME DELICATE SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES AS DOES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE U.S. CONSTITUTION. AS A RESULT, IF GISCARD SUCCEEDS IN HIS PRESIDENTIALIZING ATTEMPTS, WE CAN EXPECT TO SEE MORE POWER PROPORTIONATELY CONCENTRATED IN THE ELYSEE THAN IS HELD BY PRESIDENTS OF U.S.-STYLE REGIMES.

2. GISCARD'S COMMENTS ON INFLATION AND MONETARY STABILITY COULD ALMOST HAVE COME OUT OF THE MOUTH OF FORMER GAULLIST PRIME MINISTER MICHEL DEBRE. IN A CERTAIN SENSE THEY GIVE THE LIE TO THE UDR'S LONG-STANDING CONTENTION THAT GISCARD IS FUNDAMENTALLY AGAINST GAULLISM. WE CAN, IN FACT, EXPECT TO SEE MANY GAULLISTS EITHER STAYING IN OR NAMED TO THE NEW CABINET, WHICH WILL BE ANNOUNCED THE EVENING OF AUGUST 27. IN ADDITION BARRE AND THE PRESIDENT, HIMSELF A FORMER MINISTER OF FINANCE, WILL DO THE GAULLISTS PROUD BY TACKLING TOGETHER THE BUGABOO OF MONETARY STABILITY, AND LAY FIRM STRESS ON GETTING THE FRENCH ECONOMY ON A PAR WITH THAT OF THE OTHER "MOST INDUSTRIALLY ADVANCED AND ACTIVE COUNTRIES."

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LIKEWISE IN TRUE GAULLIST FASHION GISCARD AT ONE POINT APPEALED DIRECTLY TO THE ELECTORATE OVER THE HEADS OF POLITICIANS.

3. "I HAVE ASKED MR. RAYMOND BARRE, THE PRIME MINISTER, TO TAKE STEPS WITH A VIEW TO BROADENING (THE) PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY TOWARDS THE LEFT." EARS PERKED UP UPON THIS REMARK FROM THE PRESIDENT, BUT

IN REALITY HE WAS SIMPLY UTTERING IN BLACK AND WHITE,  
ALBEIT FOR THE FIRST TIME, HIS OLD INTENTION OF  
GOVERNING FROM THE CENTER. WHAT WAS NEW IS WHICH  
CENTER, AND ON THIS SCORE THE GAULLISTS HAVE GOOD  
REASON TO WORRY. REDUCED TO AN ESTIMATED 15 PER CENT  
OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORATE, HIT VERY HARD IN LAST  
MARCH'S CANTONAL ELECTIONS, DUE TO BE HIT EVEN HARDER  
IN THE MUNICIPAL (1977) AND LEGISLATIVE (1978)

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ELECTIONS, THE UDR IS RUNNING SCARED, AND MUCH OF  
ITS POLITICAL SABRE RATTLING IS BLUFF. MOST UDR  
LEADERS RECOGNIZE THAT IT WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR THE  
PARTY SHOULD SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF IT GO INTO  
OPPOSITION ON THE RIGHT. THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED ON  
TELEVISION THAT THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION OF

ADVANCING THE 1978 ELECTIONS (WHICH STEP CHIRAC BELIEVED WOULD CUT SHORT INEVITABLE UDR LOSSES); NEVERTHELESS THE UDR FINDS ITSELF OBLIGED, FOR THE GOOD OF THE PARTY, TO MARCH IN STEP. ON THE OTHER HAND THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THAT HE WANTED TO ENLARGE THE MAJORITY, NOT SUBSTITUTE ONE ELEMENT IN IT FOR ANOTHER, A STATEMENT CALCULATED TO SOOTHE GAULLIST FEARS OF A "DEAL" WITH THE LEFT. THIS FALL'S BUDGET VOTE WILL BE OF COURSE THE KEY TEST; THE PARTY, WITH 175 SEATS (OUT OF 490) IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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COULD STILL PROVOKE A MAJOR GOVERNMENT CRISIS.

4. PRESS AND OTHER OBSERVERS ARE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT GISCARD'S "GAMBLE." WILL HE WOO ENOUGH SOCIALISTS TO OFFSET THOSE FACTIONS OF THE UDR THAT COULD GO INTO OPPOSITION? THE QUESTION, HOWEVER, IS IMPRECISE. GISCARD'S LANGUAGE ON TELEVISION ("I REREAD...GENERAL DE GAULLE") AND THE FACT THAT THE UDR WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN GOVERNMENT, BELIE PREDICTIONS ON THE PART OF FORMER UDR SECRETARY GENERAL SANGUINETTI AND OTHERS THAT FRANCE IS ENTERING A SIXTH REPUBLIC. DE GAULLE HIMSELF WAS A SUPREME "PRESIDENTIALIST" AND WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IS AS MUCH A QUESTION OF STYLE AS OF SUBSTANCE. DE GAULLE COULD GET AWAY WITH RUNNING THE WHOLE SHOW; GISCARD, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS (SLENDER MAJORITY, IF AT ALL; DIFFICULT CONTACT WITH THE PEOPLE, INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY COLORING, ETC.) IS HAVING DIFFICULTIES IN HIS ATTEMPTS TO DO THE SAME THING. BUT THE GRAND SCHEME OF HIS LIBERAL ADVANCED SOCIETY, BASED ON "REFORMS" IN PARTICULAR AND REFORM OF FRENCH SOCIETY IN GENERAL, IS STARTING TO TAKE SHAPE, AND FRIDAY'S NEW CABINET IS EXPECTED TO BE A CONFIRMATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THIS SCHEME. GAMMON

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